

School Committee Policy Review Subcommittee
Monday, June 15, 2020
6:00 PM – 8:15 PM
Remote via Webex Event

Policy Review Subcommittee members present: David Pearlman (Chair), Sharon Abramowitz, and Jennifer Monopoli.

Other School Committee members present: Andreas Liu.

School Staff present: Mary Ellen Normen and Robin Coyne.

Others present: Brookline Fiscal Advisory Committee members Carol Levin, Cliff Brown, Peter Bleyleben, and Arthur Segel.

Mr. Pearlman called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1) Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Mr. Pearlman and seconded by Ms. Monopoli, the Policy Review Subcommittee voted unanimously (by roll call) to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2020 Policy Review Subcommittee meeting.

2) Discussion of School Admissions Policy and Admissions Guidelines for Non-Resident Students

Mr. Pearlman commented that educators in the district who participate in the Materials Fee Program and who may be furloughed have expressed concern and uncertainty regarding their children's status with the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB). Mr. Pearlman also noted that there are Hancock Village families with children in the PSB who are being dislocated to Boston during the construction (the PSB issued a waiver for the current school year, but construction will continue into the next school year). Mr. Pearlman asked Subcommittee members for input on whether either of these issues could or should be addressed through the School Admissions Policy and Guidelines for Non-Resident Students.

Regarding the Materials Fee issue, Subcommittee members noted the following: the distinction between employees who are furloughed vs employees who are laid off; that some Town employees may be in a similar situation; and that there may be legal and/or collective bargaining considerations. Members agreed that the two situations described above are areas of concern, but suggested that it might be preferable to address temporary issues through waivers for limited time periods, rather than through policy changes.

3) Overview discussion of Fiscal Management policies: #2 Annual Budget, #3 Budget Procedures, #4 Financial Reporting and Budget Transfer, #7 Use of Revenues from Non-Tax Sources, #11 Fiscal Accounting, Revolving Funds, Reporting, Audits and Use of Surplus, #12 Petty Cash Funds, #13 Purchasing Authority, #19 Vendor Relations, #20 Sales Calls and Demonstrations, #23 Payroll Procedures, #24 Student Activity Accounts

Mr. Pearlman asked Subcommittee members for input on a review of PSB Fiscal Policies. He noted that members of the Brookline Fiscal Advisory Committee (BFAC)

have offered to assist in reviewing the policies and potentially incorporating the BFAC philosophy/recommendations into the policies.

Subcommittee members suggested that the first order of business should be to ensure that the financial policies are in line with federal and state financial requirements and guidance. It is likely that many of the policies, including the Policy on Use of Revenues from Non-Tax Sources, need to be updated. Members suggested convening a small group (including representatives of the Policy Review and Finance Subcommittees) to review state requirements and guidance as well as sample financial policies from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and other districts. The group could develop recommended changes that would be widely circulated to solicit feedback.

There was general agreement that the School Committee needs to schedule further consideration of the BFAC Recommendations. Mr. Pearlman will resend his summary documents to School Committee members. Members requested a BFAC presentation that is school focused and details BFAC's vision for the schools.

4) Update on School Site Councils

It was noted that schools have been scheduling School Site Council meetings. Members suggested scheduling a training/orientation for new School Site Council members (perhaps led by Glenn Koocher, the Executive Director of the MASC). The training/orientation could be recorded and posted on the PSB Website along with the materials Mr. Koocher presented during the May 20, 2020 meeting. The School Committee could consider setting a goal for the 2020-2021 School Year to strengthen School Site Councils.

5) New Business

Dr. Abramowitz recommended that the Policy Review Subcommittee consider possible need for COVID-related policies that address homeschooling choices, remote learning options even when school is in session, attendance, and whether the district will accept credit for courses taken online/remote (at the high school level). Other members expressed a willingness to discuss the need for possible policy changes, but stressed the importance of understanding the district's plan to address concerns that may have led some families to consider other options. Mr. Pearlman commented that the Policy Review Subcommittee will meet over the summer to discuss these issues (in concert with the Curriculum Subcommittee).

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.